

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001



October 26, 2012

Dr. Steven W. Squyres
Chairman
NASA Advisory Council
Washington, DC 20546

SCW
Dear Dr. Squyres:

Enclosed is NASA's response to a recommendation from the NASA Advisory Council meeting held July 25-27, 2012, at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. Please do not hesitate to contact me if the Council would like further background on the response. I appreciate the Council's thoughtful consideration leading to the recommendations and welcome its continued findings, recommendations, and advice concerning the U.S. civil space program.

I look forward to working closely with you and members of the Council in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "CFB", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator

Enclosure:

2012-02-08 (SC-02) Independent Assessment of Cross-Directorate Mars Exploration

NASA Advisory Council Recommendation

Independent Assessment of Cross-Directorate Mars Exploration 2012-02-08 (SC-02)

Recommendation:

The Council recommends that NASA arrange for independent, authoritative assessment and advice through the National Research Council about the newly established cross-Directorate partnership for the exploration of Mars.

Major Reasons for the Recommendation:

NASA needs the broad support of the U.S. space enterprise to realize the promise of success for Mars exploration during the next several decades. An independent assessment body will provide strategic guidance to Mars program plans, ensuring that goals are well connected to the priorities and strategies laid out in the Decadal Reports.

Consequences of No Action on the Recommendation:

NASA will be less able to integrate the goals of different stakeholder communities and garner the broad support of the space community for the Mars exploration program.

NASA Response:

NASA concurs in part. NASA will make use of appropriate advisory groups, including the National Research Council (NRC) and the NASA Advisory Council (NAC), to assess within available resource constraints, our cross-Directorate Mars Exploration Program.

The status of Mars program reformulation was presented to the NRC's Committee on Astrobiology and Planetary Science September 24-25, 2012, and the NAC's Planetary Science Subcommittee October 2-3, 2012. NASA will review any strategic advice or assessment received from these independent groups in the context of our budgetary constraints. NASA's goal is to design a cross-Directorate Mars Exploration Program that is consistent with both available resources and the science objectives contained in the NRC's decadal surveys.

Enclosure